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SUBJECT: DISCONTENT IN THE RANKS: PARLIAMENTARIANS
ABANDONING PRESIDENT'S PARTY

Classified By: Ambassador Mark M. Boulware for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (SBU) Tension continues to mount between President Abdallahi and the Parliament following the installation of a new Government on 15 July 2008. The new Government was the President's attempt to placate Parliamentarians from his PNDD-ADIL party who introduced a motion of censure against Prime Minister Waghef's previous Government in late June 2008. It met most of their demands by removing from office several key Ministers who were closely connected to former President Taya and removing the opposition from the new Government. The Parliamentarians claimed, however, that neither the President nor the Prime Minister consulted them in a satisfactory manner before installing the new Government. Subsequently, 20 members of PNDD-ADIL announced their intentions to break away and form a new party whose stated goal was to gain a majority in the National Assembly and force the President to appoint a Prime Minister from its new majority party. As of 31 July, 30 of 40 PNDD-ADIL Deputies in the National Assembly and 24 of 36 PNDD-ADIL Senators announced their intention to break away and form a new party.

¶2. (SBU) There has been a significant amount of discontent within the PNDD-ADIL party since the appointment of the first Government of Prime Minister Waghef, which succeeded the technocratic Government of former Prime Minister Zeidane. Soon after Waghef was installed as PM, the Secretary General of PNDD-ADIL and several other key allies of Zeidane resigned. This was followed closely by the introduction of the motion of censure against the Government, which was signed by 15 Deputies from PNDD-ADIL and 24 Deputies from other parties. In the latest sign that the President has lost the support of his party, several members of PNDD-ADIL have again joined with the opposition in petitioning for an extraordinary session of Parliament. The Government rejected the petition on technical grounds, as it was signed by the second Vice President of the National Assembly. By law, the petition for an extraordinary session must be signed by the President of the National Assembly before submission to the President of the Republic. The Parliamentarians said they would have the petition signed by the President of the Assembly and resubmit it. While Abdallahi's obligations to announce the extraordinary session are not clearly defined in the Mauritanian Constitution, it is generally understood that he must allow it to go forward after receiving the petition from the National Assembly. The session can last up to 30 days.

¶3. (SBU) The deputies calling for the extraordinary session have identified the following goals for the extraordinary session:

- ¶A. Amendment and codification of the rules of procedure for the National Assembly
- ¶B. Election of members to the High Court of Justice
- ¶C. Examination of the management of Senate resources
- ¶D. Creation of a commission to investigate the management of state oil revenues
- ¶E. Creation of a commission to investigate the NGO of Khattou Mint Boukhary
- ¶F. Creation of a commission to examine the Special Intervention Program
- ¶G. Creation of a commission to examine the refugee

repatriation initiative

¶4. (SBU) The investigation of the NGO of President Abdallahi's wife, Khattou Mint Boukhary, is widely viewed as an attack on the President himself, as the Parliamentarians allege that Boukhary used state funds to support the NGO. Boukhary has publicly condemned both the allegations the Senators who made them and the President has said he welcomes an investigation because he is confident that state money was not used to support his wife's foundation.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: The recent defections from PNDD-ADIL and the petition for an extraordinary session have placed the President in an uncomfortable position. He said in an interview with Al-Jazeera on 28 July that he may be forced to dissolve the National Assembly if the crisis continues. It is not clear, at this point, if the President is prepared to carry out his threat. We believe he would rather find another solution to the current impasse given that there are limited donor funds to support new Parliamentary elections and there is little popular support for the Government infighting that seems to have overshadowed other important national issues. Although all parties seem to be commendably committed to the democratic process and constitutional methods, both sides have taken positions that tended to escalate rather than to defuse the crisis. The recent turmoil is likely nothing more than the growing pains of a young democracy as the Government, the President, and the Parliament seek to define their individual roles. Nonetheless, we will continue to urge restraint, compromise and continued focus on Mauritania's development challenges as the Ambassador did today in a call on the Minister for Relations with Parliament and Civil Society. END COMMENT.

Boulware